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ABSTRACT

The problems of class scheduling in higher education institutions are discussed in this research study that investigated the scheduling preferences of students at Fontbonne College, a small, private, four-year college in Missouri. Scheduling for nontraditional, part-time students at Fontbonne has centered on evening and weekend classes with increasingly longer class meetings on a concentrated eight-week basis. It is suggested that this has greatly increased the number and variety of courses offered during nontraditional time-frames. Full-time students and faculty expressed preference for traditional time frame scheduling and a traditional meeting frequency of two to three times per week for a typical three-credit course. The results of this study indicate that the scheduling preferences of the full-time academic community should be considered and at the same time, the college should continue to provide innovative, nontraditional scheduling for part-time students. Two schedules are outlined in appendices. (SF)

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# CLASS SCHEDULING PREFERENCES
# FULL-TIME STUDENTS AND FACULTY
# FONTBONNE COLLEGE
# ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

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A research study conducted
by Dr.William Friedman
Department of Business
and Administration
for the College Planning Committee

1979

RE 011 792

Class Scheduling Preferences:
Full-Time Students and Faculty
Fontbonne College
St. Louis, Missouri
April, 1979

Objectives

Reacting to the needs of the non-traditional, part-time student, Fontbonne College, a private four year institution of approximately 850 students located in the St. Louis suburb of Clayton, over the past several years, has greatly expanded course offerings during non-traditional time frames, primarily in the evening and on Saturdays. In addition to expanding the number and variety of courses offered during non-traditional time frames, the College has experimented with increasingly longer class meetings on a concentrated eight week basis. By and large, these new attempts to meet the scheduling needs of the older, part-time student, who may, for a number of reasons, reject courses offered during traditional time frames, and the traditional full-time student seeking greater periods of free time during traditional class scheduling periods, have been successful.

Concurrent to the College's commitment to provide for the class scheduling needs of the non-traditional student, some have suggested that perhaps may traditional full-time students would favor a more non-traditional, innovative approach to the scheduling of classes. Questions raised by these inquiries included:

1) Should more classes for full-time students be scheduled in the early morning, evening, and on Saturday and Sunday.

2) Should more classes for full-time students be scheduled to meet once a week throughout the semester or even perhaps for once a week for eight weeks, rather than the traditional two or three times per week for the full semester?

In order to answer the questions posed above, it was necessary to determine the preferences of full-time students and faculty. A survey approach was to be used to test various hypotheses.

Hypotheses:

Research Hypothesis:

Full-time students and faculty prefer traditional time frames for class meetings.[1] They also prefer meeting classes two or three times per week for a full semester, rather than once a week for longer meetings.

Alternate hypothesis:

Full-time students and faculty prefer non-traditional time frames for class meetings.[2] They also prefer longer

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[1] In this study the phrase "traditional time frame" is operationally defined as: "any time period starting no earlier than 8:00 a.m. and ending no later than 4:00 p.m. on any day except Saturday and Sunday."

[2] In this study the phrase "non-traditional time frame" is operationally defined as: "any time period except those that start and end between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday.

meetings on a once a week basis rather than more frequent meetings two or three times per week for the full semester.

Null hypothesis:

Full-time students and faculty have no preference or mixed preferences as regards to class scheduling and meeting frequency.

Methodology:

A questionnaire was administered to all full-time students and faculty[3] (547 students and 61 faculty). In order to assure the highest response, questionnaires were distributed to every class section meeting during the Spring Semester, 1979. A response summary follows:

Response Summary - Class Scheduling
And Meeting Frequency Preferences
Fontbonne College
April, 1979

| Research Population | | Usable Responses Research Population | | Sub-population Full-Time Students | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| # | % | # | % | # | % |
| 608 | 100 | 535 | 88 | 547 | 100 |

[3]A full-time student is a student registered for 12 or more credit hours. A member of the full-time faculty is a member of the faculty contracting to teach under the terms of the College's "full-time faculty contract."

Response Summary - Class Scheduling (Cont'd.)

| Usable Responses Sub-population Full-time Student | | Sub-population Full-time Faculty | | Usable Responses Sub-population: Full-time Faculty | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| # | % | # | % | # | % |
| 492 | 90 | 61 | 100 | 43 | 71 |

The questionnaire was developed to elicit the following information:

A) Status (student/faculty)

B) Age (students only) (22 or under/23 or older)

C) Major[4]

D) Time preferences for class scheduling[5]

E) Meeting frequency preference for a 3 credit hour course[6]

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[4]Student responses to "major" were so erratic that responses summaries by "major" were not computed as separate sub-populations.

[5]Those surveyed were asked to rank 12 possible time frames for class meetings. The ranking was to indicate 1 for best time frame, 2 for 2nd best, 3 for 3rd best, etc., and 12 for worst. The arithmetic mean for each response category was computed to 2 decimal points to yeild the mean response value for each time frame. A mean response value of 1.00 was the best possible; 12.00 was the worst possible.

[6]Those surveyed were asked to rank four possible meeting frequencies for a three credit hour course. The ranking was to indicate 1 for the best, 2 for the 2nd best, 3 for 3rd best, and 4 for worst. The arithmetic mean for each response category was computed to two decimal points to give the mean response value for each frequency. A mean response value of 1.00 was the best possible; 4.00 was the worst possible.

Findings

Responses for the research population and all sub-populations (see schedules A&B) support the research hypothesis: Full-time students and faculty prefer traditional time frame scheduling and traditional meeting frequencies. There is, however, a slight preference for three meetings per week, per semester for a typical three credit hour course by the following:

Research Population

Sub-population: All students

Sub-population: Students age 22 and under

There is also a preference for two meetings per week, per semester by the following:

Sub-population: All full-time faculty

Sub-population: Students, age 23 or older

The research population and all sub-populations preferred one 2 1/2 hour meeting per week for the full semester as 3rd best and one 4 1/2 hour meeting per week for eight weeks as 4th choice for a typical three credit course.

Conclusions

It is obvious from the survey that the traditional student attending the College on a full-time basis and the members of the full-time faculty prefer traditional time frames in scheduling classes; they also prefer two or three meetings per week for a typical three credit hour course.

These preferences should be considered by Department chairmen in making scheduling decisions. There are, however, several areas of concern that should be emphasized. They are:

1) There are only a limited number of traditional time frames available (8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Monday through Friday). Department chairmen should be careful in optimizing the utilization of these time frames so as to provide the fewest potential conflicts with other course offerings. It may be tempting to use the most favored traditional time frames almost exclusively (i.e., in the 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday period). This is a disservice to students who many times find excessive scheduling conflicts because of this.

2) The College should continue to provide innovative, non-traditional scheduling for part-time students. According to Gallay and Hunter[7], scheduling was found to be the primary barrier into the part-time student population. Department chairmen should offer traditional time frame courses in non-traditional time frames on a regular basis[8]. Such courses could be taught by full or part-time faculty.

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[7]Gallay, Ralph and Hunter, Ronald V. "Why Adults are Pursuing A Part Time Education." Collegiate News and Views, Winter, 1978-79, p. 15.

[8]Numerous studies have shown that non-traditional class scheduling is critical to a college's success in attracting the non-traditional, older student who finds himself fulfilling many roles simultaneously such as student, spouce, parent, homemaker and/or employee.

Limitations of the Study:

The conclusions reached in this research are reliable indications of class scheduling preferences for the research population only.

It is obvious from the conclusions that full-time students and faculty at Fontbonne College still prefer traditional class scheduling.

Other institutions of higher education using the same research procedure could well substantiate the alternate hypothesis. This knowledge could be very valuable in the construction of campus-wide class scheduling so as to attract as many students as possible.

A future, wider study could be undertaken to test the research hypothesis so as to provide generalized conclusions. The results of such a wider study could be very useful to college administrators in their future efforts to provide optimum class scheduling for their student population.

SCHEDULE A

Summary Schedule Research Population and All Sub-Populations
Time Preferences for Class Scheduling
Full Time Students and Faculty
Fontbonne College, April, 1979*

| All Respondents | All Faculty | All Students | Students 22 or Under | Students 23 or Older | Time Ranges |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.12 | 2.17 | 2.12 | 1.99 | 2.47 | 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 Noon Period |
| 2.83 | 3.55 | 2.77 | 2.54 | 3.38 | 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 A.M. Period |
| 3.24 | 3.42 | 3.23 | 3.07 | 3.64 | 12:00 Noon to 2:00 P.M. Period |
| 4.34 | 3.88 | 4.38 | 4.31 | 4.57 | 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. Period |
| 5.68 | 5.05 | 5.74 | 5.79 | 5.60 | 4:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. Period |
| 5.90 | 5.70 | 5.91 | 5.99 | 5.71 | 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. Period |
| 7.13 | 6.98 | 7.14 | 7.25 | 6.86 | 8:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. Period |
| 8.20 | 8.88 | 8.14 | 7.94 | 8.68 | 6:00 A.M. to 8:00 A.M. Period |
| 8.79 | 8.49 | 8.82 | 8.97 | 8.43 | 8:00 A.M. to 12:00 Noon Period (Saturday Morning) |
| 9.44 | 9.72 | 9.41 | 9.44 | 9.34 | 10:00 P.M. to 12:00 Midnight Period |
| 9.52 | 9.21 | 9.55 | 9.79 | 8.91 | 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. Period (Saturday Afternoon) |
| 10.84 | 10.98 | 10.83 | 10.98 | 10.43 | Sunday -- Any Afternoon Period |

*(1.00: Best; 12.00: Worst)

SCHEDULE B

Summary Schedule Research Population and All Sub-Populations
Frequency of Class Meeting
Full Time Students and Faculty
Fontbonne College, April 1979*

| All Respondents | All Faculty | All Students | Students 22 or Under | Students 23 or Older | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.78 | 1.98 | 1.76 | 1.63 | 2.12 | 3 Times Per Week (Mon.-Wed.-Fri.) for 16 weeks--approximately 50 minutes each meeting |
| 1.81 | 1.53 | 1.83 | 1.83 | 1.84 | 2 Times Per Week (Tues.-Thurs.) for 16 weeks--approximately 75 minutes each meeting |
| 2.73 | 2.77 | 2.72 | 2.77 | 2.60 | 1 Time Per Week for 16 weeks--approximately 2 1/2 hours each meeting |
| 3.68 | 3.72 | 3.68 | 3.77 | 3.44 | 1 Time Per Week for 8 weeks--approximately 4 1/2 hours each meeting |

*(1.00: Best; 4.00 Worst)

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